

SENATE—Monday, May 14, 2001

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, a week of responsibilities stretches out before us. As we face them, we thank You for Winston Churchill's reminder that "the price of greatness is responsibility." Father, You have entrusted the Senators with heavy responsibilities. Thank You that You will not ask more from them than You will give the strength to carry. Help them to draw on Your artesian wells of wisdom, insight, discernment, and vision. Be with them in the lonely hours of decisionmaking, of conflict over issues, and the ruthless demands of overloaded schedules. Tenderly whisper in their souls the reassurance, "I have placed you here and will not leave you, nor forsake you." In Your grace, be with their families; watch over them; and reassure the Senators that You care for the loved ones of those who assume heavy responsibilities for You. May responsibility come to mean "responsibility," a response of trust in You to carry out what You have entrusted to them. In the name of Him who lifts burdens and carries the load. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HARRY REID, a Senator from the State of Nevada, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 14, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ROBERTS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 2 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The distinguished Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The distinguished Senator from Oregon is recognized.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, the people of this country always come through when there are tough problems, as long as they know everyone is pitching in and doing their fair share.

That is the problem with much of what is coming out of Washington, DC, today, when it comes to this country's energy policy. Oregonians are telling me, for example, at townhall meetings that what alarms them about the energy debate in Washington, DC, is that it seems everybody is supposed to tighten their belt except for the powerful. I don't believe that passes the fairness test for most Americans. Even business leaders at home tell me the country just is not going to rally behind an energy plan that is not balanced, an energy plan that does not say: Everybody has to do their fair share.

There is not a whole lot of balance in a plan that would open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling now, although it will not produce any gas for at least 8 to 10 years, when our consumers are getting clobbered at the gas pump today.

Where is the balance in a plan that cuts funding for renewable energy—solar, wind, and geothermal—while

building as many as 1,900 new powerplants? Where is the balance in a plan that would provide large new tax breaks for the energy industry and tells consumers the answer is to spend their tax relief on misguided energy policies? With all due respect, the idea that Americans should have to use their much needed tax relief to prop up ill-conceived energy policies is the ultimate in throwing good money after bad.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about where I think Congress ought to go with respect to the energy issue and what could constitute some of the core principles of an effective bipartisan energy policy.

First, it is time to provide significant and real financial rewards for conservation. Everybody talks about conservation. We all know it makes sense to conserve energy. But there are very few actual financial rewards for conserving. I think it is time to put real dollars behind those who are willing to make the tough decisions with respect to conservation. For example, if it is a hardship to move your energy use from peak hours to times when demand is lower, let's reward that financially. Let's reward real-time pricing so as to take steps that are meaningful to decrease electric power shortages that are now causing price spikes and blackouts.

Second, I think it is time to lift the veil of secrecy around energy markets in this country. It is clear that energy is being commoditized, but it is not possible to get real information about supply and demand and transmission, which is what is needed when energy is being bought and sold in markets all across this country.

In electricity markets today, power is, in fact, being traded as a commodity, but basic information about how electric power systems and markets work is just unavailable in much of the United States. If electricity is going to be traded as a commodity, let the Congress take steps to ensure access to information so those markets can function efficiently.

I intend to introduce legislation shortly to ensure that Americans in every part of this country can get access to information about transmission capability, outages, and the information that is needed to be in a position to make energy markets work in a fair way.

Third, to encourage responsible power production, reward developers who demonstrate a commitment to good environmental policy. I do not think energy production and meeting

this country's environmental needs ought to be mutually exclusive. There are ways to do both. I think there ought to be an effort by Congress to reward energy developers who meet tough environmental standards by moving them to the head of the line, the head of the queue for permits. This country needs new powerplants. I think there is bipartisan support for that effort. But we ought to say to power producers and power generators, when you are going to be an environmental leader, we are going to move you to the head of the regulatory queue.

Fourth, we need to bring free enterprise back into the energy markets. In my home State of Oregon, four companies essentially control 70 percent of the gas that is sold at the pump. I believe if there were real competition at the gas pump, prices would come down. Competition works in Oregon and across this country. But a variety of anti-competitive practices are squeezing competition out of the oil industry. I do not think it is an accident that people of my State have lost more than 600 gasoline stations in just a few years. It is true in much of the country that three or four companies control delivery of gas at the pump. Unfortunately, the Federal Government seems to have taken the position with respect to competition that, unless you have a handful of big energy producers huddled up, say, at a steak house in a downtown hotel dividing up energy markets, there is really nothing wrong.

In fact, we learned last week that even though west coast gasoline markets are being redlined—there is significant evidence that those west coast gasoline markets are being redlined—the Federal Government is not prepared, under the laws as written today, to take significant action to deal with it.

Just because something is not illegal doesn't mean it is not anti-consumer and that it does not have anti-competitive ramifications. So I think it is extremely important we look now to steps that actually produce competition in the gasoline markets rather than to conclude that just because you do not have energy producers huddled up at a steak house dividing markets everything is all right.

Finally, it seems to me that good science ought to be the basis of a bipartisan effort to address our energy predicament in this country. The Vice President recently stated the United States has to build 1,300 powerplants to meet projected increases in demand for energy over the next 20 years. However, scientists at the Energy Department's National Laboratories recently said that new technologies could reduce projected growth in energy demand by 20 percent to 47 percent, which could translate into as many as 600 fewer powerplants.

Certainly on a bipartisan basis this Senate can agree that we cannot ignore

the science. More efficient transmission lines, moving away from the old model of a central powerplant and towards cleaner energy with combustion-free fuel cell technology, is just one of the options available. When it comes to the oil and gas sector, that fuel cell technology could be making cars run cleaner and more efficiently within a few years. Instead of subsidizing just the old fossil fuel industries with an energy proposal that says, go do your thing, our energy policy could be jump-starting a variety of renewable energy technologies with real promise for the future.

What I have discussed today—first, financial rewards for conservation; second, lifting the veil of secrecy around energy markets; third, creating incentives for energy developers to comply with tough environmental laws; fourth, bringing some free enterprise back into energy markets; and, fifth, looking at the science that comes out of the Energy Department itself—are five initiatives that the Senate could use on a bipartisan basis to build a sensible energy policy.

I was struck at the end of last week when the President of the United States said that Americans should use their tax relief as the primary way to deal with the energy crisis in this country. I don't think Americans ought to have to use their much needed tax relief to prop up misguided energy policies. I think that is just throwing good money after bad. I think it is important—and the distinguished Presiding Officer, the Senator from Kansas, and I have home roots in a place that knows something about energy production—to create incentives for energy production in this country. I think it is possible to do it while rewarding those who are going to meet tough environmental standards.

So I am hopeful that this week, as Congress focuses on energy policies and the President unveils his proposal, that we recognize this country is ready for bold and bipartisan leadership on the energy issue. This Congress can provide it. We can insist on policies that make sense for the environment and for consumers and for the energy industry, but it has to be a policy that says everybody does their fair share. It has to be a policy that says everybody has to be part of the solution and we are not just going to say to the country: You tighten your belts while the power folk get a free ride.

I believe it is possible to bring together responsible leaders in industry, the environmental sector, and the consumer movement to create an energy policy that will get us beyond the very difficult months ahead and build a sound foundation for the future.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for 10 minutes as if in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RURAL MENTAL HEALTH ACCESSIBILITY ACT OF 2001

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, last week we had the opportunity to introduce a bill called the "Rural Mental Health Accessibility Act of 2001."

I am pleased to be joined by Senators CONRAD, DOMENICI, JOHNSON, ROBERTS, and NELSON from Nebraska to bring forward the opportunity for us to strengthen medical provisions for mental health in rural States in particular.

As you might imagine, rural States have many unique problems. We have small towns and small cities where not all medical specialties are present. We have to build sort of a network of health care for small towns. One of the things that has been most difficult to provide in those rural areas is mental health in small towns where kids need some counseling, and where there are real problems with no one there who is a specialist in mental health.

This Rural Mental Health Accessibility Act reflects on those unique needs and provides States and local communities flexibility.

The Federal programs that assist in health care needs in Wyoming are different than they are in Pennsylvania, or in Rhode Island. We need to have flexibility in all cases, particularly in the case of mental health which is more of a specialty.

This act provides for creative and collaborative provider education to help provide education for the mental health provider so they can come to those rural areas and give some assistance in education.

It increases access to mental services to vulnerable children and seniors in unserved rural areas throughout these States.

Certainly the circumstances are unique. With the stigma associated with mental illness, people do not seek the services. They are not handled there, and it cannot be done easily.

Seventy-five percent of the 518 nationally designated mental health professional shortage areas are located in rural areas, which, I guess, is not hard to understand.

One-fifth of all rural communities have no mental health services of any kind.